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AUTHOR James, Ralph E.
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ABSTRACT

This document describes the Rocky Mount, N.C. Youth Services Center which was established as a community-based treatment program for male juvenile offenders. Designed to work with behavior problems at their source (school, home, community), the Center utilizes community-based contingency contracting with written behavioral agreements entered into by both the boys and their parents. The Center provides a noninstitutional structure, motivational incentive system and cost effectiveness. The Center's objectives include: (1) decreasing maladaptive problem behaviors; (2) providing an effective alternative to incarceration; (3) improving self-concept and general achievement; and (4) providing management training to those working with delinquent prone youth. The report includes a review of projects using contingency contracting, data summaries of the Center's results, and a table of costs. Final conclusions are pending, awaiting factor analysis of results. (Author/LAA)

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Behavior Modification in Court and Community Treatment Programs for Juvenile Offenders

by

Ralph E. James, Jr., Ph. D.
Humanities Division
North Carolina Wesleyan College

In 1970 we asked 70 police chiefs, sheriffs, school officials, social workers and judges what they thought to be the source and extent of juvenile delinquency. The survey covered eight largely rural North Carolina counties and included 92 additional questionnaires to deputies, line officers, principals, etc. Respondents overwhelmingly (78%) cited homes as the source of delinquency and indicated that the extent of delinquency is far greater, perhaps ten times greater, than the number of cases in which a juvenile petition is actually drawn.[1]

The survey indicated a need for a treatment program that could work with behavior problems at their source, in their community context, in homes, in schools. In order to avoid problems associated with institutional solutions to delinquency, problems reflected in high recidivism rates and convictions that training school environments violate social modeling needs, we set out to design a noninstitutional community-based treatment program. Institutional structure would have to be replaced with structure of a different kind. Four criteria were deemed essential for the noninstitutional alternative: (1) it should bring early success to subjects with histories of failure; (2) motivational incentives should be drawn from the natural environment; (3) motivation should occur inspite of demotivating home and school environments; (4) finally, the program should be economically feasible for local governments after initial federal support.

It was decided that a Youth Services Center at Rocky Mount, N. C., using community-based contingency contracting, would provide the needed noninstitutional structure, motivational incentive system and cost effectiveness. In September of 1970 we began contingency contracting with referrals from juvenile courts, Social

[1] Juvenile Delinquency: A Positive Approach. Research Report to the Central Regional Planning Commission of the North Carolina Governor's Committee on Law and Order by Ralph E. James, Jr. and Sim O. Wilde, Jr., 1970. An interesting corollary noted in the survey was a general lack of social structure such as the absence of organized recreational programs in rural areas.

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Services, schools and homes. Adjudicated delinquents remain technically under Social Services jurisdiction and the Center therefore serves the court indirectly. Nonadjudicated cases are accepted from any source. At this writing, earlier plans for a short term residential component have not yet materialized, but behavior modification workshops for teachers and parents have received considerable emphasis.

Before reporting first year findings, we should mention that through participation in training programs in behavior modification for the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges, we learned of the Kentsfield Rehabilitation Program, An Alternative to Institutionalization.[2] Under Judge John P. Steketee, the Kent County Juvenile Court in Grand Rapids, Michigan has been using an incentive point/contingency contracting system since 1969. Boys are paid contingently for work performed for local governments. Written behavioral agreements are drawn up at weekly group meetings and accompanied by verbal feedback on performance. Parents and boys enter into written contracts on three behaviors, one of which is curfew. Volunteers collect weekly monitoring charts of performance kept by parents. Boys then receive credit according to individual charted achievement. Up to 100 points can be earned for being on time for work and making constructive comments. Losing clothing and fighting loses 50 to 500 points and a possible return to court in the latter instance. Reinforcers (cash, movie tickets, candy, merchandise, etc.) cost approximately one point per penny value. Boys are expected to perform at 80% efficiency on the first level for two weeks; 90% on the second level for two weeks; 100% on the third or "Ace" level for two weeks. During the "Ace" period boys are asked to select a personal goal to be fulfilled during the next four to six weeks. He must also continue one group session per week and help younger boys.

The Kentsfields staff includes the following findings among those considered significant.[3]

[2] William S. Davison, II, John and John P. Steketee, 1970.

[3] Appendix IV.

1. "81% of the boys in the Kentsfields Rehabilitation Program would be in an institution or training school without the program." . . .

2. "Cost of the Kentfields Program is estimated to be $300 per year per boy. Average institutional cost for 1969 $4,725. Boys Training School cost. $6,658 (1969) - $6,760 (1970)

3. 24 of the first 32 boys referred completed Kentfields (5 removed from program by P.O., 3 returned to court)

10 are home and in school

12 are home working

1 committed to SDSS

1 enlisted in army."

In addition to the Kentsfields findings, our own work with economically and academically disadvantaged high school students through Project Upward Bound contributed to our confidence in contingency management. Upward Bound students themselves successfully shaped cooperative behaviors from 50 students from a nearby training school. They tutored training school boys two hours per week for approximately 12 weeks. Tokens redeemable in the college bookstore were used. The 1970 summer Upward Bound program at N. C. Wesleyan College and U. N. C. G. - A. & T. University were run on a combination of contingency contracts and token economies. Results encouraged project directors to repeat the program in 1971. Fifty students in the 1971 N. C. Wesleyan College Upward Bound program earned stipends contingently through contracts administered by the college student tutors/counselors. Upward Bound students earned an average of 96.4% of possible points (1 point = 1 penny) on 10 contracts during 7 weeks of resident study. Although students contracted only one reading class per day, the SRA pre-post-test rendered a 3.5 month average gain. A few students regressed, most advanced. Some advanced as much as two years. Three students who advanced were recruited through the Rocky Mount Youth Services Center. Their earning rates were 83%, 97% and 90%. All N. C. Wesleyan Upward Bound students are continuing on

contingency contracts during the school year. In one area school 10 teachers will also be under contingency performance contract in a Title III E. S. E. A. project called "Accountability An In House Approach."[4] Teacher bonuses are contingent upon student achievement in contingency management classrooms.

Evaluation of the Rocky Mount Youth Services Center community-based contingency contracting program must, of course, await longitudinal data but first year preliminary results are now complete. These results must be tentatively viewed because (1) low control community based programs have hidden variables that are difficult to factor, (2) the program evaluation design is evolving as the staff learns evaluation techniques in a community environment and (3) reliability rates for home reports of performance are not yet established.

The objectives and procedures of the Center are (1) to provide an effective alternative to incarceration that offers supportive structure, (2) to decrease specific maladaptive problem behaviors, (3) to improve self-concept and general achievement, and (4) to provide behavioral management training to those working with delinquent prone youth or potential delinquents. The latter is the Center's delinquency prevention program. Objectives (1), (2), and (3) are addressed through written contingency contracts. The contract begins with a 10 to 20 minute report of the problem behavior. Often this involves a written or an oral communication from the referring agency or person. Thus far no testing has been done by the Center; the focus is upon pinpointing overt behaviors such as truancy or breaking and entering. Generally, the program has emphasized treatment over diagnosis. Having pinpointed a

[4]Roanoke Rapids Public Schools, Roanoke Rapids, N. C., Robert Clary, Project Director. Contingency management component provided by Behavior Management Systems, Associates, 311 S. Grace St., Rocky Mount, N. C. Unlike Texarkana, Tex. and Gary, Ind. experiments this program leaves control with the local school system. Forty teachers are being reinforced by bonuses and extra supplies. BMSA, behavior management contractor, has trained an additional 20 teachers, grades K through 12 in the use of achievement contracts and a back up token system. This contract system has recently been extended without teacher bonuses, but with individualized achievement contracts in the Weldon, N. C. school system. 1487 children in all grades are in the Weldon reinforcement system at an annual cost of $59,680.

few target behaviors the staff contract writer establishes a reinforcement heirarchy by asking the child what he would like to work for and recording preferences on the contract. The Center has developed standard tokens and also uses contributed hamburger tokens, movie passes and other merchandise. Reinforcement menus are shown during the contract writing process. After contingencies are explained and the time frame established, all concerned parties sign the contract.

Results

Data summary for the Rocky Mount Youth Services Center (2 months on data)

1. Active Cases

No.	Referring Agency	Reason	Average Time on Contract between 10/70 and 8/71	% of Objectives Performed
12	Court	Truancy	5.5 mo. (2-9)	78.3
2	Court	Runaways	8 mo. (7,9)	76.5
1	Court	Bomb threat	6 mo.	100
1	Court	Traffic violation	4 mo.	84
1	Court	Assault	5.5 mo.	80
1	Court	Larceny	7 mo.	79
Court totals 18	Court		6.1 mo.	81.3
11	School	School disruption	5.3 mo. (3-9)	78.5
3	Home	Discipline	2.7 mo. (3,3,2)	87.7
2	Social Services	School disruption	5.5 mo. (5,6)	77.5
34 totals			4.9 mo.	81.3

Data summary for the Rocky Mount Youth Services Center (2 months or more)

II. Inactive cases

No.	Reason	Average Time on Contract	% of Objectives Performed
4	Contract Failed	4.6 mo.	52
3	Doing well enough to be turned over to school	4 mo.	
2	Moved	4.5 mo.	93
2	Contract not fully established	.5 mo.	95 (1)
2	Placed in training school to get out of home environment	3 mo.	80
14 totals		4 mo.	82.5

Data Summary for the Rocky Mount Youth Services Center (2 months or more)

	Average Time on Contract	% of Objectives
Active cases (34)	4.9 mo.	81.3
Inactive cases (14)	4 mo.	82.5
total (48)		81.9

From available data on referring agencies contract success rates

Agency	No.	Rate
Court	24	77.4%
School	14	73.3%
Home	3	87.3%

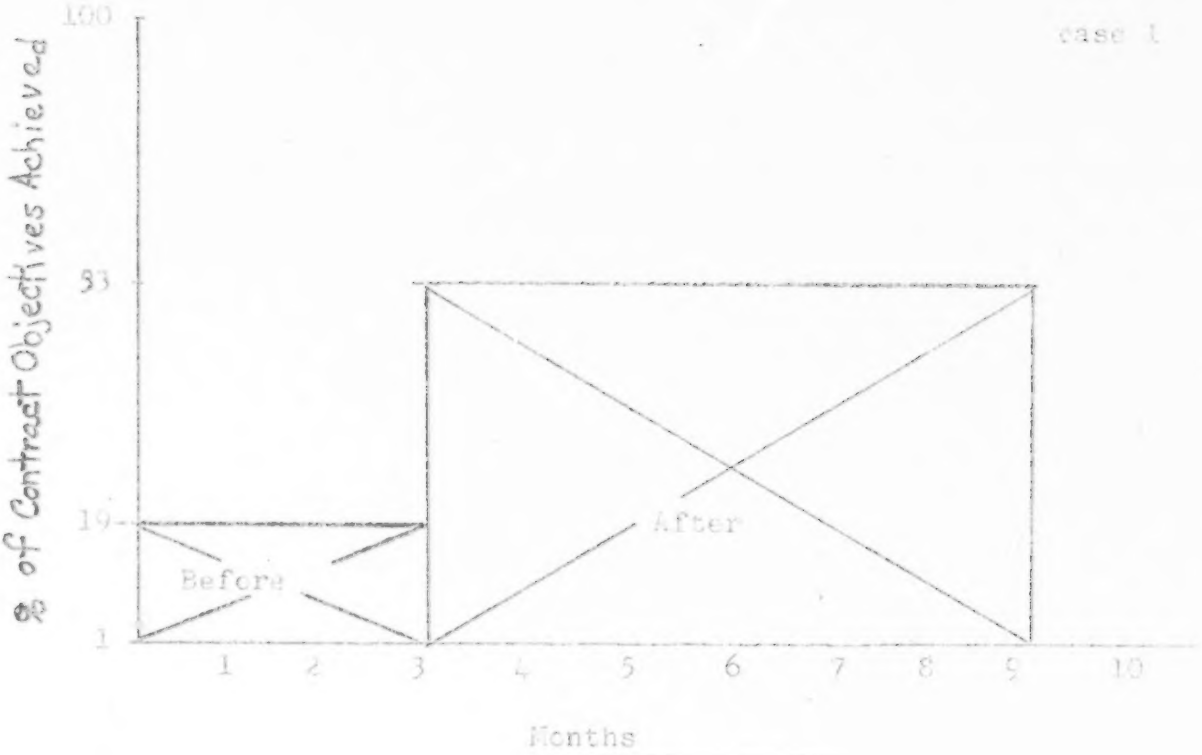
Comparison of six Truancy cases' school attendance rates before and after intervention

	Be fore(%)	time	After (%)	time
1.	19	3 mo.	53	6 mo.
2.	57	7 mo.	80	2 mo.
3.	1	5 mo.	90	4 mo.
4.	51	5 mo.	100	4 mo.
5.	49	5 mo.	75	4 mo.
6.	61	3 mo.	72	6 mo.
Averages	39.8		78.8	

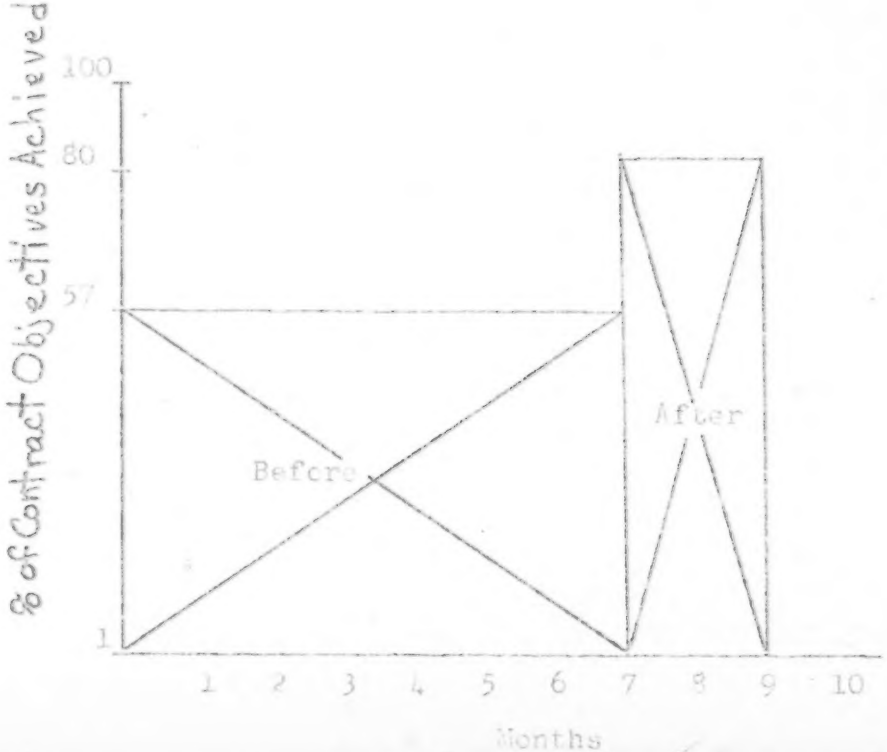
(see following graphs)

Comparison of Truancy Cases Before and After Intervention

case 1

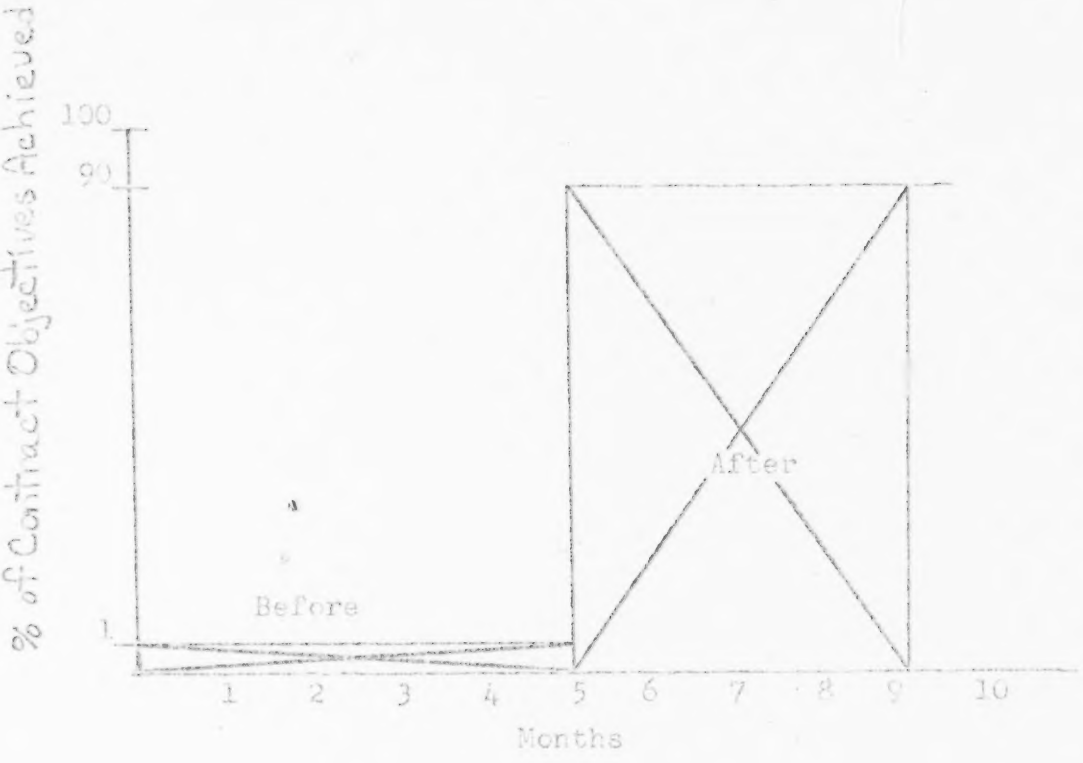


case 11

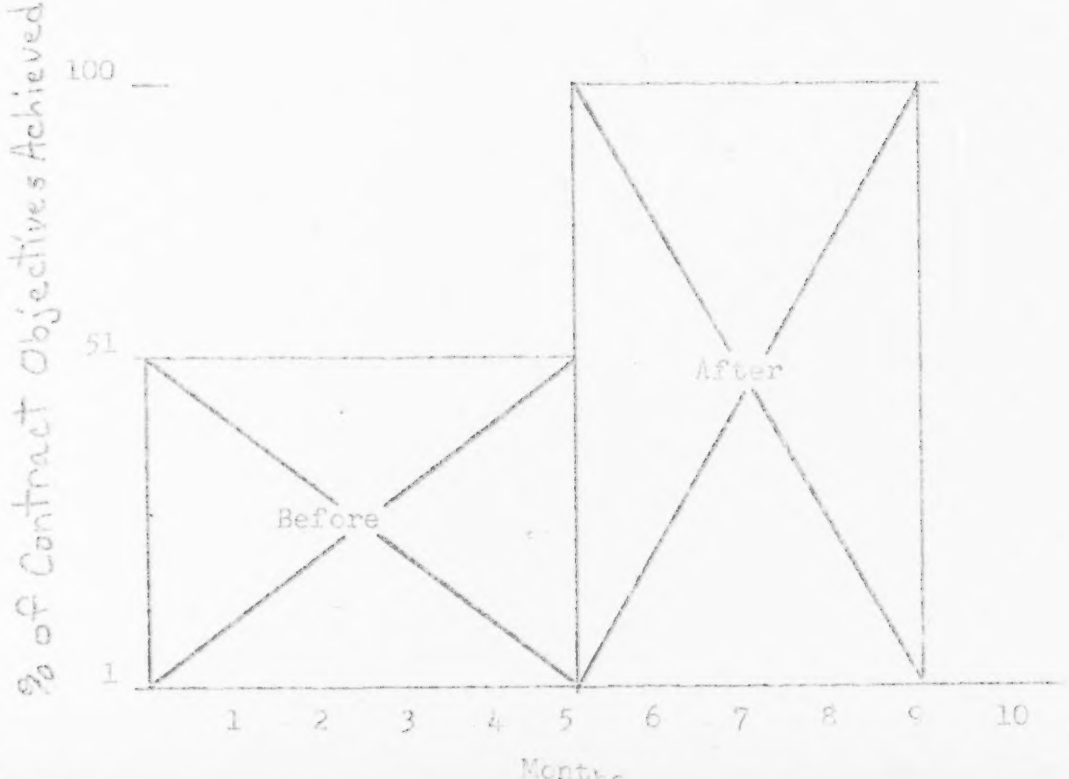


Comparison of Truancy Cases Before and After Intervention

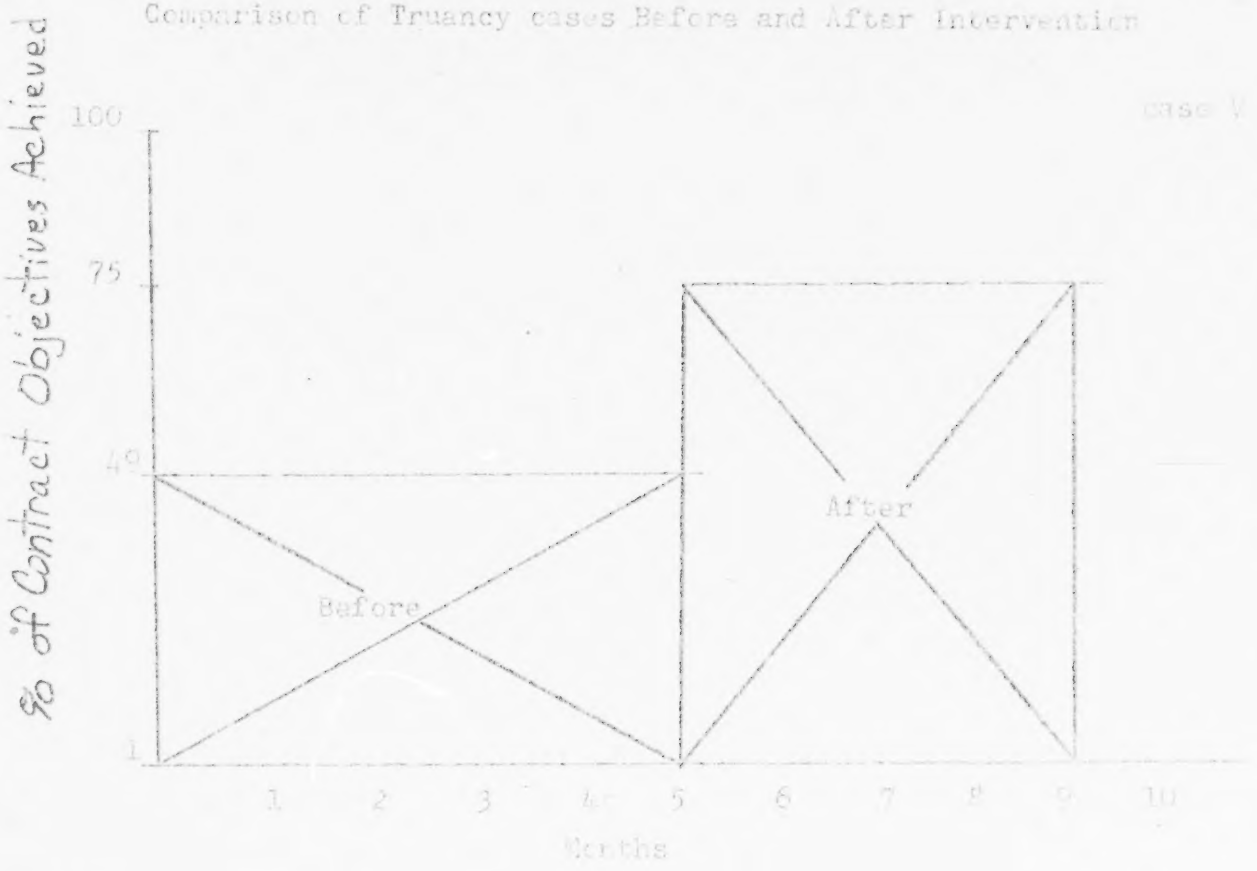
case III

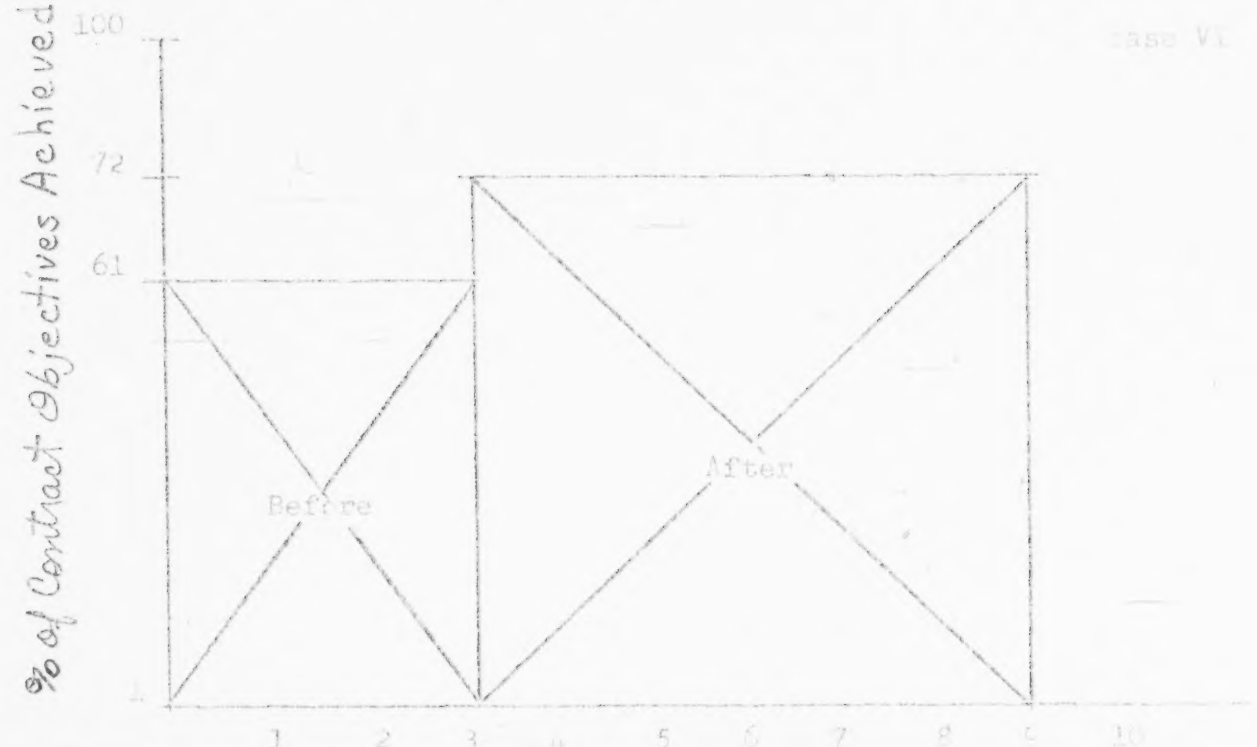


case IV

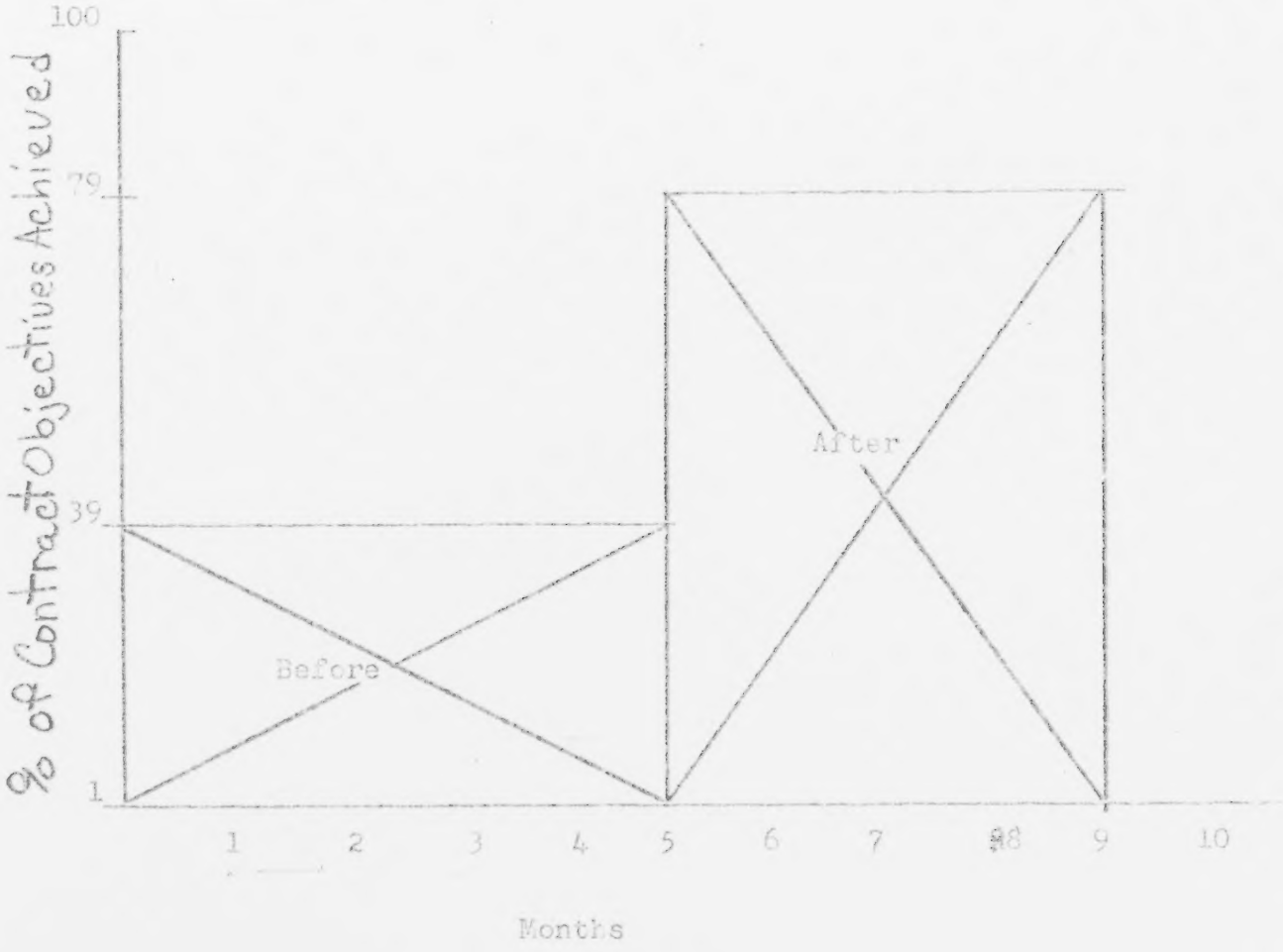


Comparison of Truancy cases Before and After Intervention





Average of Six Truancy Cases Before and After Intervention



Costs

A. Direct

48 cases at $42000 per year = $875 per case per year

B. Direct plus Indirect costs benefit

48 cases plus 330 contract equivalents
(contract equivalents are based upon an estimate of 3 effective contracts per teacher trained by the Center at 110 teachers.) =
378 at $42000 =

$111 per contract per year

C. Direct plus Indirect cost benefit plus cost of probation

$111	per contract per year
900	Est. costs of probation
$1,011	Total

Estimated training school costs per year:

$4,000	
-1,011	
$2,989	Savings per year per case

Preliminary Conclusions

1. Community-based contingency contracting appears to be working reasonably well with referrals from court, schools and homes.

2. Final conclusions must await establishment of better baselines and factor analysis. Factor analysis must isolate (1) to what extent referral itself serves as a stimulus to adaptive behavior. High recidivism rates among delinquent populations suggests neither referral nor incarceration as a significant deterrent but more research seems required. (2) What effect does the relatively positive attitude of the Center staff have? (3) In what circumstances are contracts most effective? least effective? Thus far no pattern has emerged: all types fail; all types succeed. Consistency by the contract manager may be more important than the type of behavior involved. Home referrals have a higher success rate than court and school referrals but the number of home referrals is too small for conclusions to be drawn.